Islamic Way of Life

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1. ISLAMIC CONCEPT OF LIFE

The chief characteristic of the Islamic Concept of Life is that it does not admit a conflict, nay, not even a significant separation between life-spiritual and life-mundane. It does not confine itself merely in purifying the spiritual and the moral life of man in the limited sense of the word. Its domain extends to the entire gamut of life. It wants to mould individual life as well as the social order in healthy patterns, so that the Kingdom of God may really be established on the earth and so that peace, contentment and well-being may fill the world as waters fill the oceans. The Islamic Way of Life is based on this unique approach to life and a peculiar concept of man's place in the Universe. That is why it is necessary that before we proceed to discuss the moral, social, political and economic systems of Islam, we should have a clear idea of the Islamic Concept of Life.

There are certain basic postulates which should be understood and appreciated at the very outset. These postulates are as follows:

1.1. Basic Postulate

Allah Who is the Creator, the Ruler and the Lord of the entire Universe has created man and provided him with temporary station in that part of His vast kingdom (cosmos) which is known as the earth. He has endowed man with the faculties of thinking and understanding, and has given him the power to distinguish right from wrong. Man has also been invested with freedom of will and choice and the power to use the resources of the world in any manner he likes. In short, man has been given a sort of autonomy while being appointed by God on earth as a successor to the beings that had previously populated it.

Before assigning to man the inheritance of the earth, God made it explicitly clear to him that He alone is the Lord, the Ruler and the Deity. As such, the entire Universe and all the creatures in it (including man) must submit to Him alone. Man must not think himself totally free and should know that this earth is not his permanent abode. He has been made to live upon it only during the period of his probation, and in due course, he will return to his Lord, to be judged according to the way he has utilized the period of probation. The only right course for man is to acknowledge Allah as the only Lord, the Sustainer and the Deity and to follow His Guidance and His Commands in all walks of life. Man must live this life with the realization that he is to be judged and his sole objective should be to merit the pleasure of Allah so as to emerge successful in the final test. Conduct which is contrary to this would lead man astray. If man follows the course of piety and Godliness (which he is free to choose and follow) he will succeed in this world and in the next, in this world he will live a life of peace and contentment, and in the Hereafter he will qualify himself for the heaven of eternal bliss, al-Jannah. And if he chooses to follow the other course, i.e., that of Godlessness and evil (which he is equally free to choose and follow) his life will be one of corruption, disruption and frustration in this world and he will meet colossal misfortune in the life to come - that abode of pain and misery which is called Jahannam (Hell).

After administering the warning, God set man upon the earth and provided the very first human beings (Adam and Eve) with Ms Guidance in accordance with which men were to live on the earth. Thus, man's life on this earth did not begin in utter darkness. The very first man was provided with a burning torch of light and guidance so that humanity might attain its glorious destiny. The very first man received revealed knowledge from God Himself. He had knowledge of the reality and was given the code of life by following which he could live a life of bliss and success. This code of life was Islam, the attitude of complete submission to Allah, the Creator of man and of the whole universe. It was this religion which Adam, the first man, passed down to posterity. But later generations gradually drifted away from the right path and adopted different erroneous paths. Because of negligence, they lost the original teachings, or due to folly or mischief they adulterated and perverted them. They associated with God innumerable human beings, non-human objects and imaginary entities as deities and indulged in Shirk (polytheism) of the worst type. They mixed up the pure teachings of God with strange myths, ideas and philosophies and thus produced a jungle of religions and cults. They discarded the God-given principles of social ethics and collective morality, the Shari'ah, and deprived the human life of peace and tranquility.

Although men departed from the path of truth, disregarded and distorted the Shari'ah and some of them even revolted against the code of Divine Guidance, yet God did not destroy them or force them to the right course. Forced conversion to the right path was not in keeping with the

autonomy He had given to man. Instead, God appointed certain virtuous persons from amongst the people themselves, to discharge the responsibility of recalling and guiding men to the right path during their sojourn on the earth. These men believed in God, and lived a life of obedience to Him. He honored them by His revelations and gave them the knowledge of reality. These men, known as prophets (peace be upon all of them), were assigned the task of presenting the message of truth to humanity and of asking the people to come to the path of the Lord.

These prophets were raised in all epochs, in all lands and in all nations. Out of numerous prophets sent by God, the Qur'an explicitly mentions twenty-five. All of them brought the same message, all of them advocated the same way of life (Deen) i.e., the way which was revealed to man on the first day of his existence. All of them followed the same guidance: the guidance which was prescribed by the Lord for man at the outset of his career on the earth. All of them stood for the same mission: they called men to the religion if Islam, asked those who accepted the Divine Guidance to live in accordance with it: and organized them into a movement for the establishment of the Divine Law, and for putting an end to all deviations from the Right Path. Every prophet tried to fulfill this mission in the best possible way. But quite a number of people never accepted this guidance and many of those who accepted it gradually drifted astray and, al lapse of time, lost the guidance or distorted it through innovations and perversions.

At last, God raised Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) in the land of Arabia and assigned to him the completion of the mission for which earlier prophets were ordained. The message of Mohammed (peace be upon him) was for the whole of mankind. He presented anew the teachings of Islam in their pristine form and provided mankind once again, with the Divine Guidance which they had lost in its original form. He organized all those who accepted his message into one Ummah (Nation) which was charged with reconstructing its own life in accordance with the teachings of Islam, by calling mankind to the path of righteousness and with establishing the supremacy of the word of God on the earth. This guidance is enshrined in the Holy Qur'an which constitutes the only right code of conduct for mankind.

1.2. Iman (Faith): Its Nature And Character

We have discussed above those basic postulates of Islam which, on the one hand, revealed God's plan for providing guidance to man in this world and, on the other, defined the nature, position and status of man in it. Now, let us study the foundations on which the Qur'an wants to develop man's relationship with Allah and the concept of life which naturally follows from that relationship.

The Qur'an deals with this problem on many occasion but the entire concept of life envisaged as epitomized in the following verse:

" God hath purchased of the Believers. Their persons and their goods; For their (in return) Is the Garden (of Paradise) They fight in His Cause, And slay and are slain: A promise binding on Him In Truth, through the Law, The Gospel, and the Qur'an: And who is more faithful To his Covenant than God? Then rejoice in bargain Which ye have concluded: That is the achievement supreme. "(Al-Qur'an, IX:II1)

In the above verse the nature of the relationship which comes into existence between man and God because of Imam (the act of reposing faith in Allah) has been called a "bargain". This means that Iman in Allah is not a mere metaphysical concept; it is in the nature of a contract by which man barters his life and his belongings with Allah in exchange for Paradise in the life Hereafter. God so to say, purchases a believer's life and property and promises, by way of price, the award of Paradise in the life after death. The concept of bargain has important implications and we should, therefore, first of all clearly understand its nature and meanings.

The fact of the matter is that each and every thing in this world belongs to Allah. He is the real owner of them all. As such, man's life and riches, which are part of this world, also belong to Him, because it is He Who created them and it is He Who has assigned them to each man for his use. Looking at the problem from this angle; the question of His purchasing what is already His: Man is not their real owner; he has no title to sell them. But there is one thing which has been conferred on man, and which now belongs fully to him, and that is his free will, the freedom of choice of following or not following the path of Allah. As man has been endowed with free will in this respect, he is free to acknowledge or not to acknowledge the reality of things. Although this freedom of will and choice that man possesses does not automatically make him the real owner of all the energies and resources on which he has command. Nor does he acquire the title to utilize them in any way he likes. Nor does his acknowledgment of reality or refusal to do so in any way affects reality as such. Yet it does mean that he is free to acknowledge the sovereignty of God and His over lordship on his own life and belongings or refuse to acknowledge it and to arrogate to himself the position of total independence. He may, if he so likes, regard himself free from all obligations to the Lord and may think that he enjoys full rights and powers over all that he has, and thus, may use them according to his own wishes unfettered by any higher command. It is here that the question of bargain comes in. This bargain does not mean that God is purchasing something which belongs to man. Its real nature is this: All creation belongs to God but He has bestowed certain things on man to be used by him as a trust from God. And man has been

given freedom to honestly fulfill the trust or if he so likes, to betray it or misuse it. Now, God demands that man should willingly and voluntarily (and not under duress or compulsion) acknowledge those things as His which really belongs to Him and man should use them as a trust from God and not as something his own to be used as he pleases. Thus, a man who voluntarily renounces the freedom even to refuse God's supremacy and instead acknowledges His sovereignty. So to say, "sells" his "autonomy" (which too is a gift from God and not something which man has acquired of his own) to God, and gets in return God's promise of eternal bliss that is Paradise. A man who makes such a bargain is a "Mu'min" (Believer). And Iman (Belief) is the Islamic name for this contract; while the one who chooses not to enter into this contract, or after making such a contract amounting to its gross breach, is one who has followed the course of the devil. Thus Allah says:

"Say if it be that your fathers, Your sons, your brothers, Your mates, or your kindred; The wealth that you have gained; The commerce in which you fear a decline: or the dwellings in which you delight Are dearer to you than God, Or His apostle, of the striving In His cause; then wait until Allah brings about His Decision. And God Guides not the rebellious." (Al-Qur'an, IX:24)

The attempt to avoid or abrogate this contract can lead to Kufr (total disbelief). Such is the nature and the contract. Now let us briefly study its various aspects and stipulations.

God has put us to serious trail on two counts:

He has left man free. But even after giving him that freedom He wishes to see whether or not man realizes his true position. Whether he remains honest and steadfast and maintains loyalty and allegiance to the Lord, or loses his head and revolts against his own Creator; whether he behaves like a noble soul, or tramples under foot all values of decency and starts playing fantastic tricks.

He wants to see whether man is prepared to have such confidence in God as to offer his life and wealth in return for what is a promise. That is to materialize in the next world and whether he is prepared to surrender his autonomy and all the charms that go with it, in exchange for a promise about the future.

It is an accepted principle of Islamic law that Iman consists of adherence to a certain set of doctrines and whosoever reposes faith in those doctrines becomes a Mu'min. No one has a right to denounce such a man as non-believer or drive him out of the fold of the Ummah (Islamic Community), save when there is explicit proof of falsity or of renunciation of the belief. This is the legal aspect of the problem. But in the eyes of the Lord, only that Iman is valuable which consists in complete surrender of one's will and choice to the Will of Allah. It is a state of thought and action wherein man submits himself fully to Allah, renouncing all claim to his own supremacy. It is something that comes from the heart. It is an attitude of the mind and prepares man for a certain course of action. If a man recites the Kalima, enters into the contract, and even offers his prayers and performs other acts of worship, but in his heart he regards himself as the owner and the sovereign dispenser of his physical and mental powers and of his moral and material resources, uses them to his own liking and upholds his freedom of will, then, however much of the people may look upon him as Mu'min (believer), in the eyes of God he will be a non-believer, for he has, in fact, not really entered into the bargain which according to the Qur'an is the essence of Iman (belief). If a man does not use his powers and resources in the way God has prescribed for him, and instead uses them in pursuits which God has prohibited, it clearly shows that either he has not pledged his life and property to Allah, or even after pledging them to Him, he falsifies the pledge by his conduct.

This nature of Iman makes the Islamic way of life distinct from, nay, the very opposite of, the non-Islamic way of life. A Muslim, who has real faith in Allah, makes every aspect of his subservience to the Will of Allah. His entire life is one of obedience and surrender and he never behaves in an arrogant or an autonomous way, except in a moment of forgetfulness. And after such a lapse as soon as he becomes conscious of it, he again re-addresses himself to his Lord and repents his error. Similarly, a group of people or a society which consist of true Muslims can never break away from the Law of their Lord. Its political o, its social organization, its culture, its economic policy, its legal system and its international strategy must all be in tuned with the Code of Guidance revealed by Allah and must, in no way, contravene it. And if ever, through error or omission, any contravention it committed, they must, on realizing this, correct this immediately and return forthwith to the state of subservience to the Law of God. It is the way of the non-believers to feel free from God's Guidance and to behave as one's own master. Whoever adopts such a policy, even though he may bear a name similar to that of a Muslim, is treading the satanic path and is following the way of the non-believers.

The Will of God, which is obligatory upon man to follow, is the one which God Himself has revealed for man's guidance. The Will of God is not to be determined by man himself. God has Himself enunciated it clearly and there is no ambiguity about it. There, if a person or society is honest and steadfast in its contract with Allah, it must scrupulously fashion its entire life in accordance with the Book of God and the Sunnah (practical example) of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

A little reflection will show that these aspects and stipulations are logically implicit in the bargain and it is also clear from the above discussion why the payment of the "price" has been postponed tot he life after death. Paradise is not the reward for the mere profession of the bar-

gain, it is the reward for the faithful execution of the contract. Unless the contract is fully executed and the actual life-behavior of the "vendor" complies with the terms of the contract he does not become entitled to the reward. Thus, the final act of the "sale" is concluded only at the last moment of the vendor's life, and as such, it is natural that the reward should be given to him in the Life Hereafter.

There is another significant point which emerges from the study of the verse quoted above (Al-Qur'an, IX:24) when it is read with reference to its context. In the verses preceding it, reference has been made to the people who professed Iman and promised a life of obedience, but when the hour of trail came they proved unequal to the task. Some neglected the call of the hour and betrayed the cause. Others, played tricks of hypocrisy and, refused to sacrifice their lives and riches in the cause of Allah. The Qur'an, after exposing these people and criticizing their insincerity makes it clear that Iman is a contract, a form of pledge between man and God. It does not consist of a mere profession of belief in Allah. It is an acknowledgment of the fact that Allah alone is our Sovereign Lord and Ruler and that everything that man has, including his life, belongs to Him and must be used in accordance with His directives. If a Muslim adopts a contrary course he is insincere in his profession of faith. True believers are only those who have really sold their lives and all that they possessed to God and who followed His dictates in all fields of activity. They stake their all in obedience to the Commands of the Lord, and do not deviate even an inch from the path of loyalty to God. Such only are the true believers.

1.3. The Plan Of Life

This discussion makes it clear that Islam begins with laying down the proper lines on which man's relationship with the Lord is to be reared; his entire individual and social life is an exercise in developing and strengthening this relationship. Iman, the starting point of our religion, consists in the acceptance of this relationship by man's intellect and will. Thus, Islam is actual submission, the way of surrender to the Will of God in all aspects of life and behavior. Now, we are in a position to cast a glance over the plan of life which Islam envisages. This plan - the code of conduct - is known as the Shari'ah. Its sources are the Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

The Final Book of God and the Final Messenger stands today as a repository of this truth, and they invite the whole of humanity to accept the truth. God Almighty has endowed men with free will in the moral domain, and it is to this free will that this acceptance bears reference. Consequently, it is always a voluntary act and not of compulsion. Whosoever agrees that the concept of Reality stated by the Holy Prophet and the Holy Book is true, it is for him to step forward and surrender his will to the Will of God. It is this submission which is called "Islam", the fructification of faith (Iman) in actual life. And those who do so, i.e., those who of their own free will, accept God as their Sovereign, and surrender to His Divine Will and undertake to regulate their lives in accordance with His Commandments, are called "Muslims".

All those persons who thus surrender themselves to the persons who thus surrender themselves to the Will of God are welded into a community and that is how the "Muslim society" comes into being. Thus, " is a principled society - a society radically different from those which are founded on the basis of race, color or territory. This society is the result of a deliberate choice and effort; it is the outcome of a "contract" which takes place between human beings and the Creator. Those who enter into this contract, undertake to recognize God as their sovereign, His Guidance as Supreme, and His injunctions as absolute Law. They also undertake to accept, without question or doubt His classifications of Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, Permissible and Prohibited. In short, the Islamic society agrees to limit its volition to the extent prescribed by the All-Knowing God. In other words, it is God and not man whose will is the primary Source of Law in a Muslim society.

When such a society comes into existence, the Book and the Messenger prescribe for it a code of life called the Shari'ah, and this Society is bound to conform to it by virtue of the contract it has entered into. It is, therefore, inconceivable that any Muslim society worth the name can deliberately adopt a system of life other than the Shari'ah. If it does so, its contract is ipso facto broken and the whole society becomes "un-Islamic".

But we must clearly distinguish between the everyday sins or violations of the individuals and a deliberate revolt against the Shari'ah. The former may not imply breaking up of the contract, while the latter would mean nothing short of that. The point that should be clearly understood here is that, if an Islamic society consciously resolves not to accept the Shari'ah, and decides to enact its own constitution and laws or borrows them from any other source, (in utter disregard of the Shari'ah) such a society breaks its contract with God and forfeits its right to be called "Islamic".

1.4. The Objectives and Characteristics of the Plan

Let us now proceed to understand the plan of life envisaged by the Shari'ah. To understand that, it is essential that we start with a clear conception of the objectives and the fundamentals of Shari'ah.

The main objective of the Shari'ah is to construct human life on the basis of Ma'rufat (virtues) and to cleans

it of the Munkarat (vices). The term Ma'rufat proclaims as good and right everything declared by Allah and by His messenger to be so. Taking this definition as the norm, the term Ma'rufat should denote all the virtues and good qualities that have always been accepted as "good" by the pure and unadulterated human conscience. Conversely, the word Munkarat refers to everything that Allah and His Apostle (peace be upon him) have denounced as evil. In the light of this understanding, it denotes all the sins and evils that have always been condemned by pure human nature as "evil". In short, the Ma'rufat are in harmony with human nature and its requirements in general, whilst the Munkarat are just the opposite. The Shari'ah gives a clear view of these Ma'rufat and Munkarat and states them as the norms to which the individual and social behavior should conform.

The Shari'ah does not, however, limit its function to providing us with an inventory of virtues and vices only; it lays down the entire plan of life in such a manner that virtues may flourish and vices may not pollute and destroy human life.

To achieve this end, the Shari'ah has embraced in its plan all the factors that encourage the growth of good and has recommended steps for the removal of impediments that might prevent its growth and development. The process gives rise to subsidiary series of Ma'rufat consisting of the causes and means initiating and nurturing the good, and yet another set of Ma'rufat consisting of prohibitory commands in relation to those things which act as preventives or impediments to good. Similarly, there is a subsidiary list of Munkarat which might initiate or allow growth of evil.

The Shari'ah shapes the Islamic society in a way conducive to the unfettered growth of good, virtue and truth in every sphere of human activity, and gives full play to the forces of going all directions. And at the same time it removes all impediments in the path of virtue. Along this, it attempts to eradicate evils from its social plan by prohibiting vice, by obviating the causes of its appearance and growth, by closing the inlets through which it creeps into a society and by adopting deterrent measures to check its occurrence.

1.5. Ma'rufat (ma'roof)

The Shari'ah classifies Ma'rufat into three categories: the Mandatory (Fardh and Wajib), the Recommendatory (Matlub) and the Permissible (Mubah).

The observance of the mandatory (Ma'rufat) is obligatory on a Muslim society and the Shari'ah has given clear and binding directions about them. The recommendatory Ma'rufat are those which the Shari'ah wants a Muslim society to observe and practice. Some of them have been very clearly demanded of us, while others have been recommended by implication and inference from the sayings of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). Besides this, special arrangements have been made for the growth and encouragement of some of them in the plan of life enunciated by the Shari'ah. Others still have simply been recommended by the Shari'ah leaving it to the society or to its more virtuous elements to look to their promotion.

This leaves us with the permissible Ma'rufat. Strictly speaking, according to the Shari'ah everything which has not been expressly prohibited by it is a Permissible Ma'ruf (i.e., Mubah). It is not at all necessary that an express permission should exist about it or that it should have been expressly left to our choice. Consequently, the sphere of permissible Ma'rufat is very wide so much so that except for the things specifically prohibited by the Shari'ah, everything is permissible for a Muslim. And this is exactly the sphere where we have been given freedom and where we can legislate according to our own discretion to suit the requirements of our age and conditions, of course in keeping with the general spirit of the Shari'ah.

1.6. Munkarat (Munkar)

The Munkarat (or the things prohibited in Islam) have been grouped into two categories: Haram, i.e., those things which have been prohibited absolutely and Makruh, i.e., those things which have been disliked and discouraged. It has been enjoined on Muslims by clear mandatory injunctions to refrain totally from everything that has been declared Haram. As for the Makruhat the Shari'ah signifies its dislike in some way or another, i.e., either expressly or by implication, giving an indication also as to the degree of such dislike. For example, there are some Makruhat bordering on Haram, while others bear affinity with the acts which are permissible. Of course, their number is very large ranging between the two extremes of prohibitory and permissible actions. Moreover, in some cases, explicit measures have been prescribed by the Shari'ah for the prevention of Makruhat, while in others such arrangements have been left to the discretion of the society or of the individual.

1.7. Some other Characteristics

The Shari'ah, thus, prescribes directives for the regulation of our individual as well as collective life. These directives touch such varied subjects as religious rituals, personal character, morals, habits, family relationships, social and economic affairs, administration, rights and duties of citizens, judicial system, laws of war and peace and international relations. In short, it embraces all the various departments of human life. These directives reveal what is good and bad, what is beneficial and useful and what is injurious and harmful. What are the virtues which are

the evils for which we have to suppress and guard against. What is the sphere of our voluntary, untrammeled, personal and social action and what are its limits. And finally, what ways and means we can adopt in establishing such a dynamic order of society and what methods we should avoid. The Shari'ah is a complete plan of life and an all embracing social order - nothing superfluous, nothing lacking. Another remarkable feature of the Shari'ah is that it is an organic whole. The entire plan of life propounded by Islam is animated by the same spirit. Hence, any arbitrary division of its plan is bound to harm the spirit as well as the structure of the Islamic order. In this respect, it might be compared to the human body which is an organic whole. A leg pulled out of the body cannot be called one-eight or one-sixth man, because after its separation from the living body, the leg can no longer perform its human function. Nor can it be placed in the body of some other animal with any hope of making it human to the extent of that limb. Likewise, we cannot form a correct opinion about the utility, efficiency and beauty of the hand, the eyes or the nose of a human being separately, without judging its place and function within the living body.

The same can be said in regard to the scheme of life envisaged by the Shari'ah. Islam signifies the entire scheme of life and not any isolated part or parts thereof. Consequently neither can it be appropriate to view the different part of the Shari'ah in isolation from one another and without regard to the whole, nor will it be of any use to take any part and bracket it with any other "ism". The Shari'ah can function smoothly and can demonstrate its efficacy only if the entire system of life is practiced in accordance with it and not otherwise.

2. THE MORAL SYSTEM OF ISLAM

Moral sense is inborn in man and through the ages it has served as the common man's standard of moral behavior, approving certain qualities and disapproving others. While this instinctive faculty may vary from person to person, human conscience has given a more or less uniform verdict in favor of certain moral qualities as being good and declared certain others as bad. On the side of moral virtues, justice, courage, bravery and truthfulness have always elicited praise. History does not record any period worth the name in which falsehood, injustice, dishonesty, and breach of trust may have been upheld. Fellow-feeling, compassion, fidelity, and magnanimity have always been valued while selfishness, cruelty, miserliness and bigotry have never received the approval of the human society; men have always appreciated perseverance, determination and courage and have never approved of impatience, fickle-mindedness, cowardice and imbecility. Dignity, restraint, politeness, and amiability have throughout the ages been counted among virtues, whereas snobbery, misbehavior and rudeness have never found recognition as good moral qualities. Persons having a sense of responsibility and devotion to duty have always won the highest regard of men; never have people who are incompetent, slothful and lacking in sense of duty been looked upon with approval. Similarly, in respect of the standard of good and bad in the collective behavior of society as a whole, the verdict has always been almost unanimous. Only that society has been looked upon as worthy or honor and respect which possesses the virtues of organization, discipline, mutual affection and fellow feeling and has established a social order based on justice, freedom and equality of men. As opposed to this, disorganization, no-discipline, anarchy, disunity, injustice and social imbalance have always been considered as manifestations of decay and disintegration in a society. Robbery, murder, larceny, adultery, fraud and graft have always been condemned. Slandering, scandal mongering and blackmailing has never been considered as wholesome social activities.

Contrary to this service and care of the aged, help of one's kith and kin, regard for neighbors, loyalty to friends, assistance of the weak, the destitute and the orphans, and nursing the sick are qualities which have always been highly valued ever since the dawn of civilization. Virtuous, polite, mild and sincere persons have always been welcomed. Individual who are upright, honest, sincere, outspoken and dependable, whose needs conform to their words, who are content with their own rightful possession, who are prompt in the discharge of their obligations to others, who live in peace and let others live in peace and from whom nothing but good can be expected, have always formed the core of any healthy human society.

This shows that human moral standards are in fact universal and have been well-known to mankind throughout the ages. Good and evil are not myths to be hunted out. They are well- known realities and are equally well-understood by all. The sense of good and evil is inherent in the very nature of man. Hence, in the terminology of the Qur'an virtue is called "Ma'roof ' (something to be announced) and evil is designated as "Munkar" (something to be denounced); that is to say virtue is known to be desirable for every one and evil is not known to commend itself in any way. This fact is mentioned by the Qur'an when it says:

"And (Allah gave to the Soul) its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right; ..... (Quran, 91:8)

2.1. Why Differences ?

The questions that arises are: if the basic values of good and evil have been so well-known and there has virtually been a universal agreement thereon, then why do varying patterns of moral behavior exist in this world? Why are there so many and do conflicting moral philosophies? Why

do certain moral standards contradict each other? What lies at the root of their difference? What is the unique position of Islam in the context of the prevailing ethical systems? On what grounds can we claim that Islam has a perfect moral system? And what exactly is the distinctive contribution of Islam in the real of ethics? These questions are important and must be squarely faced; but justice cannot be done to them on the brief span of this talk.

To cut a long story short, I shall briefly sum up some of those important points which strike us at the very outset when we undertake a critical examination of the contemporary ethical systems and the conflicting patterns of moral behavior.

(a) The present moral system fail to integrate various moral virtues and norms by prescribing their specific limits and utility and assigning to them their proper place. That is why they fail to provide a balanced and coherent plan of social conduct.

(b) The real cause of their differences seems to lie in the moral systems offering different standards for good and bad actions and enunciating different means of distinguishing good form evil. Differences also exist in respect of the sanction behind the moral law and in regard to the motives which impel a person to follow it.

(c) On deeper reflection, we find that the grounds for these differences emerge from different peoples conflicting views and concepts about the universe, the place of man in the universe, 'and the purpose of man on the earth. Various theories of ethics, philosophy and religion are but a record of the vast divergence of views of mankind on these most vital questions, viz. Is there a God and a Sovereign of the universe and if there is, is He One or are there many gods? What are Divine Attributes? What is the nature of the relationship between God and the human beings? Has God made any arrangements for guiding humanity through the rough and tumble of life or not? Is man answerable to God or not? If he is, then what are the matters for which he is to be answerable? What is the ultimate aim of man's creation which he should keep in view throughout his life? Answers to these questions will determine the way of life, the ethical philosophy and the pattern of moral behavior of the individual and the society.

It is difficult for me in this brief talk to take stock of the various ethical system prevalent in the world, indicate what solutions each one of them has proposed to these questions and what has been the impact of these answers on the moral evolution of the society believing in these concepts. Here I can confine myself to the Islamic concept only and this I shall try to propound.

2.2. Islamic Concept of Life And Morality

The viewpoint of Islam, however, is that this universe is the creation of God Who is One. He created it and He alone is its unrivaled Master, Sovereign and Sustainer. The whole universe is functioning under His Divine Command. He is All-Wise, All-Powerful and Omniscient. He is Subbooh and Quddoos that is, free from all defects, mistakes, weaknesses and faults and pure in every respect). His God-hood is free from partiality and injustice. Man is His creature, subject and servant and is born to serve and obey Him.

The correct way of life for man is to live in complete obedience to Him. It is not for man to determine the mode of worship and obedience; it is for God to decide this. God, being the master, has raised from time to time prophets for the guidance of humanity and has revealed His books through them. It is the duty of man to take the code of his life from these sources of divine guidance. Man is answerable to God for all his actions in life. The time for rendering an account will be in the life-hereafter and not in this world. The short span of worldly life is really an opportunity to prepare for that great test. In this life all efforts of man should be centered on the object of soliciting the Pleasure and Blessings of God in the Hereafter. During this test every person is responsible for all his beliefs and actions. He, with all his faculties and potentialities, is on trial. There will be an impartial assessment of his conduct in life. By a Being Who keeps a complete and correct record not merely of his movements and actions and their influence on all that is in the world from the tiniest speck of dust to the loftiest mountains but also a full record of his innermost ideas and feelings and intentions.

2.3. Goal of Moral Striving

This is Islam's fundamental attitude towards life. This concept of the universe and of man's place therein determines the real and ultimate goal which should be the object of all the endeavors of mankind and which may be termed briefly as "seeking the pleasure of God". This is the standard by which a particular mode of conduct is judged and classified as good or bad. This standard of judgment provides the nucleus around which the whole moral conduct should revolve. Man is not left like a ship without moorings, being tossed about by the blows of wind and tides. This dispensation places a central object before mankind and lays down values and norms for all moral actions. It provides us with a stable and flawless set of values which remains unaltered under all circumstances. Moreover, with making the "pleasure of God" as the object of man's life, a highest and noblest objective is set before humanity, and thus, unlimited possibilities are opened for man's moral evolution, unstained at any stage by any shadow of narrow selfishness or bigoted race or nation worship.

While providing a normal standard Islam also furnishes us with means of determining good and evil conduct. It does not base our knowledge of vice and virtue on mere

intellect, desire, intuition, or experience derived through the sense-organs, which constantly undergo shifts, modifications and alterations and do not provide definite, categorical and unchanging standards of morality. It provides us with a definite source, the Divine Revelation, as embodied in the Book of God and the Sunnah way of life of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). This source prescribes a standard or moral conduct that is permanent and universal and holds good in every age and under all circumstances. The moral code of Islam covers the smallest details of domestic life as well as the broad aspects of national and international behavior. It guides us in every stage of life. These regulations imply the widest application of moral principles in the affairs of our life and make us free from exclusive dependence on any other source of knowledge, expect as an aid to this primary source.

2.4. Sanction Behind Morality

This concept of the universe and of man's place therein also furnishes the sanction that must lie at the back of every moral law. Viz., the love and fear of God, the sense of accountability on the Day of Judgment and the promise of eternal bliss and reward in the life hereafter. Although Islam wants to cultivate a powerful and strong mass opinion, which may induce individuals and groups to abide by the principles of morality laid by it and also aims at the evolution of a political system which would enforce the moral law, as far as possible, through its legislative and executive power. Islam's moral law does not really depend on these external pressures alone. It relies upon the inherent urge for good in every man which is derived from belief in God and a Day of Judgment. Before laying down any moral injunction, Islam seeks to firmly implant in man's heart the conviction that his dealings are with God Who sees him at all times and in all places. That he may hide himself from the whole world but not from Him. That he may deceive everyone but cannot deceive God. That he can flee from the clutches of any one else but not from God's. That while the world can see man's onward life, only God probes into his innermost intentions and desires, that while he may, in his short sojourn on this earth, do whatever he likes but in any event he has to die one day and present himself before the Divine court of justice where no advocacy, favor, recommendation, misrepresentation, deception or fraud will be of any avail and where his future will be decided with complete impartiality and justice. There may or may not be any police, law court or jail in the world to enforce the observance of these moral injunctions and regulations but this belief firmly rooted in the heart, is the real force at the back of the moral law of Islam which helps in getting it enforced. If popular opinion and the coercive powers of the state exist to give it support so much the better; otherwise, this faith alone can keep a Muslim individual and a Muslim community on the straight path of virtue, provided, the spark of genuine faith dwells in their hearts.

2.5. Motives and Incentives

This concept of Islam about man and his place in the universe also provides those motivating forces which can inspire a person to act in conformity with the moral law. The fact, that a man voluntarily and willingly accepts God as his own Creator, and the obedience to God as the mode of his life and strives to seek His Pleasure in his every action, provides a sufficient incentive to enable him to obey the commandments which he believes to be from God. Along with this, the belief in the Day of Judgment and the belief that whosoever obeys Divine Commands is sure to have a good life 'in the Hereafter, the Eternal Life, whatever difficulties and handicaps he may have to face in this transitory phase of life, provides a strong incentive for virtuous life. On the other hand, the belief that whoever violates the Commandments of God in this world and dies in a state of Kufr (unbelief) shall have to bear eternal punishment however superficially nice a life he may have led in this temporary abode, is an effective deterrent against violation of moral law. If this hope and fear are firmly ingrained, and deeply rooted in one's heart, they will provide a strong motive-force to inspire one to virtuous deeds even on occasions when worldly consequences may appear to be very damaging and harmful, and it will keep one away from evil even on occasions when it looks extremely attractive and profitable.

This clearly indicates that Islam possesses a distinctive criterion of good and evil, its own source of moral law, and its own sanction and motive force, and by them its virtues in all spheres of life after knitting them into a balanced and comprehensive plan. Thus, it can be justifiably claimed that Islam possesses a perfect moral system of its own. This system has many distinguishing features and I shall refer to the three most significant ones which, in my opinion, can be termed its special contributions to ethics.

2.6. Distinctive Features of Islamic Moral Order

By setting Divine pleasure as the objective of man's life, it has furnished the highest possible standard of morality. This is bound to provide limitless avenues for the moral revolution of humanity. By making Divine Revelation the primary source of knowledge, it gives permanence and stability to the moral standards which afford reasonable scope for genuine adjustment, adaptations and innovations though not for perversions, wild variations, atomistic relativism or moral fluidity. It provides a sanction to morality in the love the fear of God which will impel man to obey the moral law even without any external pressure. Through belief in God and the Day of Judgment, it fur-

nishes a motive force which enables a person to adopt the moral conduct with earnestness and sincerity, with all the devotion of heart and soul.

It does not, through a false sense of originality and innovation, provide any novel moral virtues nor does it seek to minimize the importance of the well-known moral norms nor give exaggerated importance to some and neglect others without cause. It takes up all the commonly known moral virtues and with a sense of balance and proportion it assigns a suitable place and function to each one of them in the total plan of life. It widens the scope of their application to cover every aspect of man's individual and collective life his domestic associations, his civic conduct, and his activities in the political, economic, legal educational and social realms. It covers his life from home to society, from the dining table to the battlefield and peace conferences, literally from the cradle to the grave. In short, no sphere of life is exempt from the universal and comprehensive application of the moral principles of Islam. It makes morality reign supreme and ensures that the affairs of life, instead of being dominated by selfish desires and petty interests, should be regulated by the norms of morality.

It stipulates for man a system of life which is based on all good and is free from all evil. It invokes the people, not only to practice virtue, but also to establish virtue and eradicate vice, to bid good and to forbid wrong. It wants that the verdict of conscience should prevail and virtue must not be subdued to play second fiddle to evil. Those who have responded to this call and gathered together into a community (Ummah) are given the name "Muslim" and the singular object underlying the formation of this community (Ummah) is that it should make an organized effort to establish and enforce goodness and suppress and eradicate evil. The Qur'an is quite explicit on this fact as can be seen from the following verse:

"Ye are the best for Peoples, evolved For mankind, Enjoining what is right, Forbidding what is wrong, And believing in God. If only the People of the Book Had faith, it were best For them: among them Are some who have faith, But most of them Are perverted transgressors." (Qur'an, 3:1 10)

And also in the following verse:

"(They are) those who, If we establish them In the land, establish Regular prayer and give Regular charity, enjoin The right and forbid wrong: With God rests the end (And decision) of (all) affairs." (Qur'an, 22:41)

It will be a day of mourning for the community and a bad day for the entire world if the efforts of this very community were at anytime directed towards establishing evil and suppressing good.

3. ISLAMIC POLITICAL SYSTEM

The political system of Islam has been based on three principles, viz., Tawheed (Oneness of God), Risalat (Prophethood) and Khilafat (Caliphate). It is difficult to appreciate the different aspects of the Islamic policy without fully understanding these three principles. I will, therefore, begin with a brief exposition of them. Tawheed (Oneness) means that one God alone is the Creator, Sustainer and Master of this universe and of all that exists in it organic or inorganic. The sovereignty of this kingdom rests only in Him. He alone has the right to command or forbid Worship and obedience are due to Him alone, none else sharing it in any degree or form. Life, in all its multifarious forms, our physical organs and faculties, the apparent control which we have over everything that exists in this universe, and the things themselves none of them has been created or acquired by us in our own right. They are the bountiful provisions of god and in bestowing them upon us, no one is as Him. Hence, it is neither for us to decide the aim and purpose of our existence or to prescribe the limits in our worldly authority nor is anyone else entitled to make these decisions for us. This right vest only in God Who has created us endowed us with mental and physical faculties, and provided all material provisions for our use. This principle of the Oneness of God altogether negates the concept of the legal and political sovereignty of human begins, individually or collectively. Nothing can claim sovereignty, be it a human being, a family, a class or group of people, or even the human race in the world as a whole. God alone is the Sovereign and His Commandments are the Law of Islam.

The medium through which we receive the Law of God is known as "Risalat" (Prophet hood). We have received two things from this source:

The Book in which God has expounded His Law; and The authoritative interpretation and exemplification of the Book of God by the Prophet, through his word and deed, in his capacity as the last messenger of God. The broad principles on which the system of human life should be based have been stated in the Book of God. Further, the Prophet of God has, in accordance with the intention of the Divine Book, set up for us a model of the system of life in Islam by practically implementing the law and providing necessary details where required. The combination of these two elements, according to Islamic terminology, is called the "Shari'ah". There is a specific purpose for man's existence. This purpose is achieved when man fulfills his function and is missed when man fads to live up to his designated role. In that case, his life will be barren and devoid of any original meaning. Total loss and perdition await everyone who fails to respond to Allah's call.

This special role relating man to his Creator is subservience to Allah and worship of Him. All aspects of

man's life are based on this consideration. Thus, the meaning of worship must be extended to go beyond mere rituals into all activities since Allah does not only call upon us to perform rituals but His injunctions regulate all aspects of life. The Qur'an develops this theme:

"Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: 'I will create a vicegerent on earth'" (Qur'an 2:30)

It is this Khilafat on earth which encompasses the range of activities of this human being. It consists in settlement on earth, exploration of its resources and energies, fulfillment of Allah's purpose of making full use of its resources and developing life on it. In brief this task requires the implementation of Allah's way which is in harmony with the Divine Law governing the whole universe.

Thus, it becomes clear that the meaning of worship, which is the very purpose of man's existence and his primary function, is much more comprehensive than mere rituals. The role of Khilafat is definitely an integral part of meaning of worship. The truth about worship comes out in two essential points, namely:

1) There should be a feeling of absolute certainty and conviction about the meaning of worship of Allah in one's heart; a feeling that the only possible relationship which holds is one of creator and the created and nothing but that.

2) It is imperative to turn to Allah dedicating to Him every stir of one's conscience, every fluttering of the senses, every movement of life. This dedication should be channeled solely to Him and nobody else. No other feeling should have any room left, except in so far as it is construed as part of the meaning of worship of Allah. In this way the meaning of worship is fulfilled. Thus, work becomes one with rituals; rituals one with settlement on earth; settlement on earth like strive for Allah's cause; strive in the way of Allah like patience in bearing calamities contentedly in the knowledge that they are part of Allah's plan; all these are instances of worship of Allah.

With this healthy frame of mind, based on the right understanding on man's role in this universe, man becomes ready to implement Allah's teaching, as communicated through the message of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

This is exactly what Islam means when it lays down that man is Khalifah (servant) of God on the earth. The state that is established in accordance with this political theory will have to fulfill the purpose and intent of God by working on God's earth within the limits prescribed by Him and in conformity with His instructions and injunctions.

3.1. Purpose Of The Islamic State

I shall now place before you a brief outline of the type of state which is built on the foundation of Tawheed (the Oneness of God), "Risalat" (the Prophethood of Muhammad) and "Khilafat" (the Caliphate).

The Holy Qur'an clearly states that the aim and purpose of this state is the establishment, maintenance and development of those virtues, with which the Creator of this universe wishes the human life to be adorned and the prevention and eradication of those evils the presence of which in human life is utterly abhorrent to God. The state in Islam is not intended for political administration only nor for the fulfillment through it of the collective will of any particular set of people; rather, Islam places a high ideal before the state for the achievement of which, it must use all the means at its disposal. And this purpose is that the qualities of purity, beauty, goodness, virtue, success and prosperity which God wants to flourish in the life of His people, should be engendered and evolved. And that all kinds exploitation, injustice and disorders which, in he view of God, are ruinous for the world and detrimental to the life of His creatures are suppressed and prevented. Simultaneously, by placing before us this high ideal, Islam gives us a clear outline of its moral system clearly stating the desired virtues and the undesirable evils. Keeping this outline in view the Islamic state can plan its welfare program in every age and in any environment.

The persistent demand made by Islam is that the principles or moral in must be observed at all cost and in all walks of life. Hence it lays down an unalterable policy for the state to base its politics on justice, truth and honesty. It is not prepared, under any circumstance whatsoever, to tolerate fraud, falsehood and injustice for the sake of any political, administrative or national expediency. Whether it be the mutual relations of the rulers and the ruled within the state, or the relations of the state with other states, precedence must always be given to truth, honesty, and justice over material consideration. It imposes similar obligations on the state as on the individual. Viz., to fulfill all contracts and obligations, to have uniform measures and standards for dealings, to remember duties along with the rights and not to forget the rights of other when expecting them to fulfill their obligations; to use power and authority for the establishment of justice and not for the perpetration of injustice; to look upon duty as a sacred obligation and to fulfill it scrupulously; and to regard power as a trust from God and use it with the belief that one has to render an account of one's actions to Him in the Hereafter.

3.2. Fundamental Rights

Although an Islamic state may be set up in any portion of the earth, Islam does not seek to restrict human rights or privileges to the geographical limits of its own state. Islam has laid down some universal fundamental rights for humanity as a whole, which are to be observed and respected under all circumstances whether such a per-

son is resident within the territory of the Islamic state or outside it, whether he is at peace with the state or at war. Human blood is sacred in any case and cannot be spilled without justification. Its is not permissible to oppress women, children, old people, sick persons or the wounded. Woman's honor and chastity are worthy of respect under all circumstances. The hungry person must be fed, the naked clothed, and the wounded treated medically irrespective of whether they belong to the Islamic community or not or even if they are from amongst its enemies. These, and a few other provisions have been laid by Islam fundamental rights for every man by virtue of his status as a human being to be enjoyed under the constitution of an Islamic state. Even the rights of citizenship in Islam are not confined to persons born within the limits of its state but are granted to every Muslim irrespective of his place of birth. A Muslim ipso facto becomes the citizen of an Islamic state as soon as he sets his foot on its territory with the intent to live therein and thus enjoys equal rights of citizenship along with those who acquire its citizenship by birthright. Citizenship has therefore, to be common among all the Islamic states that may exist in the world and a Muslim will not need any passport for entry in or exit from any of them. And every Muslim is to be regarded as eligible and fit for all positions of the highest responsibility in an Islamic State without any discussions of race color or class. Islam has also laid down certain rights for the non-Muslims who may be living within the boundaries of an Islamic State and these rights must necessarily from part of the Islamic Constitution.

According to the Islamic terminology such non-Muslims are Dhimmee (the covenant). implying that the Islamic state has entered into a covenant with them and guaranteed their protection. The life, property and protected exactly life that of a Muslim citizen. There is no difference at all between a Muslim and Dhimmee in respect of the civil or criminal law. The Islamic State shall not interfere with the personal law of the Dhimmme. They will have full freedom of conscience and belief.

3.3. Executive And Legislative

The responsibility for the administration of the Government, in an Islamic state, is entrusted to an Amir (leader or chief) who may be likened to the President or the Prime Minister in the conventional democratic state.

The basic qualifications for the election of an Amir are that he should command the confidence of the ABLUL HAL WAL'AQD [The Constitutional Body).

They are recruited from among the scholars (of Islam), leaders, and notables who effectively have the duty to carry out this task of appointing the ruler. In this, they do not act on their own personal preferences, but on behalf of the whole nation, being as they are, its representatives. Three conditions must be met for eligibility to membership of this body, namely:

Moral credit (piety and moral standards). To be well versed in religion so as to be in a position to decide upon who deserves the position of Amir. Good and sound judgment leading to a sharp perception of who is most suitable for the role of Amir. The Amir can retain office only so long as he observes Allah's Shari'ah laws. Being himself the primary example of it both in his dealings and conduct, honoring his commitments and being true to his trust; in brief, he should conform to the conditions originally stipulated upon his holding office and will have to vacate his office when he loses this confidence. But as long as he retains such confidence he will have the authority to govern and exercise the powers of the Government, of course, in consultation with the Shura (the advisory council) and within the limits set by a Shari'ah. Every citizen will have the right to criticize the Amir should he deviate from the straight path, fail to honor the trust laid in him, transgress and tyrannize over people, change his conduct for the worst, freeze the implementation of Allah's penal code, or flouts Allah's regulations in anyway. If he fails to live up to one of the conditions stipulated for his eligibility to the office, the nation has the right to overrule his judgment either by correcting him or by deposing them.

Legislation in an Islamic state will be restricted within the limits prescribed by the law of the Shari'ah. The injunctions of God and His legislative body can make any alterations or modifications in them or make any law repugnant to them. As for the commandments which are liable to two or more interpretations the duty of ascertaining the real intent of the Shari'ah, in such cases, will devolve on people possessing a specialized knowledge of the law of Shari'ah. Hence, such affairs will have to be referred to a sub committee of the advisory council compressing men learned in Islamic Law. A vast field will still be available for legislation on questions not covered by any specific injunctions of the Shari'ah and the advisory council or legislature will be free to legislate in regard to these matters.

In Islam the judiciary is not placed under the control of the executive. It derives its authority directly from the Shari'ah and is answerable to God. The judges, no doubt can be appointed by the Government but once a judge has occupied the bench he will have to administer justice among the people according to the law of God in an impartial manner. The organs and functionaries of the Government will not be outside his legal jurisdiction much so that even the highest executive authority of the Government is liable to be called upon to appear in a court of law as a plaintiff or defendant like any other citizen of the state. Rulers and the ruled are subject to the same law and there can be no discrimination on the basis of position, power or privilege. Islam stands for equality and

scrupulously sticks to this principle in social, economic and political realms alike.

4. ISLAMIC SOCIAL ORDER

The foundations of the social system of Islam rest on the belief that all human beings are equal and constitute one single fraternity.

4.1. Equality Of Mankind

God created a human pair to herald the beginning of the life of mankind on earth and all the persons inhabiting this world today have sprung from this pair. For some time in the initial stages the progeny of this pair remained a single group. It had one religion and spoke the same language. There were little or no difference among them. But as their numbers gradually increased, their diversification and growth were divided into various tribes, and nationalities. Their languages became different; their modes of dress varied; and their manners of living also became distinct from one another.

All these differences are said to be signs from Allah. They do exist in the world of reality. Hence, Islam recognizes them as matters of fact. It does not seek to wipe them out or to ignore them but affirms that their advantage consists in affording the only possible means of distinguishing one form the other. But the prejudices which have arisen among mankind out of these differences in the shape of groupings and organizations based on race, color, language, nationality, etc., are disapproved by Islam. Islam regards all distinctions of birth, of high and low amen, of upper and lower classes, on natives of the soil and aliens as the manifestation of their ignorance. It declares that all men in the world have sprung from the same parents and therefore, are equal in their status as human beings.

After propounding this concept of equality of mankind, Islam adds that if there can be any real difference between man and man it cannot be one of race, color, country or but one of their relationship with their Creator. The most honored of people in the sight of God is the most righteous. On the basis of this fundamental tenet, Islam seeks to build principled society as against the racial, national and parochial societies existing in the world. The basis of cooperative effort among men in such a society is not one's birth but a creed an a moral principle. Any one, if he believes in God as his Master and Lord and accepts the guidance of the prophets (the essence of which is embodied in Islam, the message of the last Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)) as the law of his life, can join this community, whether he is a resident of America or Africa whether he belongs to the Semitic race or the Aryan; whether he is black in color or white skinned; whether he speaks a European language or Arabic. All those who join this community will have the same rights and social status. They will not be subjected to any racial, national or class distinct of any kind. No one will be regarded as high or low. There will be no untouchable among them, nor could be polluted by the touch of anyone's hand. There will be no handicaps for them in the matter of marital relations, eating and drinking and social contacts. None will be looked down upon as lowly or mean by reason of his birth or profession. Nobody will claim any distinctive rights by virtue of his caste, community or ancestry. Man's merit will not depend on his family connections or riches, but only on whether he is better than others in moral conduct or excels others in piety and righteousness.

Such a social order, out-stepping the geographical boundaries and limits of race, color and language as it does, can spread itself in all parts of the world and on its foundations can be raised the edifice of the universal brotherhood of men. In societies based on race or nationality, only those people can join who belong to a particular race or country and the door is closed in the face of those who do not belong to them. But in Ns highly principled society anyone who accepts the creed and its moral standard can become its member, possessing equal rights with everyone else. As for those who do not accept this creed, the community, while it cannot receive them within its fold, is prepared within the limits laid down by law and decency. To give them all the basic human rights on condition that they are from the people of the Book or those who are classified under their category.

After appreciating these foundations of Islamic social order, we would like to cast a glance over the principles and patterns of social relationship which have been fostered by Islam.

4.2. The Institution Of Family

The foremost and fundamental institution of human society is the unit of family. A family is established by the coming together of a man and a woman, and their contact brings into existence a new generation. It then produces ties of kinship and community, which gradually develop into a large society. The family is the institution through which a generation prepares the succeeding generation for the service of human civilization and for the discharge of its social obligations with devotion, sincerity and enthusiasm. This institution does not merely recruit cadets for the maintenance and development of human desire that those who have to replace them in future should be better than themselves. In this respect, the family can be truly called the fountain-head of the progress, development, prosperity and strength of human civilization on the earth. Hence, among social problems Islam devotes much attention to those relating to the family and strives to establish this important social unit on the healthiest

and strongest foundations. According to Islam the correct form of relationship between man and woman is marriage, that is, the one in which full social responsibilities are undertaken by them and which results in the emergence of a family. Free sex-license and irresponsible behavior are not condoned by Islam as innocent pastimes or ordinary transgressions. Rather, they are acts which strike at the very roots of human society. Hence, Islam holds every form of extra matrimonial sex-relationship as sinful, forbidden (Haram) and punishable under the criminal law of Islam. It prescribes severe punishments for the offense so that such unsociable behavior may not become common. At the same time it aims at purifying and purging the society of all activities which encourage such irresponsible actions or provide opportunities for them. Regulations of Hijab (For Muslim Women), ban on free mixing of men and women, restrictions on filthy music and pictures, and discouragement of the spread and propagation of obscenities and aberrations, are all intended to guard against this. Their sole object is to protect and strengthen the institution of the family. Islam does not merely regard the desirable form of social contact as just permissible but holds and affirms it as a good and virtuous act, indeed, an act of worship. It does not simply look upon celibacy of an adult person with disfavor, but it calls upon every young man to take in his turn upon himself the social responsibilities of married life just as his parents did so in their time. Islam does not merely regard asceticism and perpetual celibacy as no virtue at all but as aberrations and departures from the true nature of man and acts of revolt against the Divine plan of things. It also strongly disapproves those rites, ceremonies or restrictions which tend to make marriage a difficult and tedious affair. The intention of Islam is that marriage may become easy and fornication the most difficult thing in society, and not vice versa as it is in most of the societies today. Hence, after debarring a few specified relatives from entering into matrimony with one another, it has legalized marital relations with all other near and distant kith and kin. It has removed all distinctions of caste and community and permitted matrimony of any Muslim with any other Muslim. It has recommended that the amounts of Mehr (dower) should be fixed at a low and easy figure, the burden of which can be easily borne by the husband and has dispensed with the necessity of priests and offices of compulsory registration. In an Islamic society marriage is such a plain and simple ceremony as can be performed anywhere before two witnesses, though it is essential that the proceedings should not be kept secret. The idea is that the society should know that the couple is now going to live a matrimonial life. The family itself Islam has assigned to man a position of authority so that he may maintain order and disciple, as the chief of the household. Islam expects the wife to obey and look after the comforts and well- being of her husband and expects the children behave accordingly to their parents. Islam does not favor a loose and disjointed family system which is devoid of any authority, control and discipline and in which someone is not pointedly responsible of the proper conduct and behavior of its members. Discipline can only be maintained through a central authority and in the view of Islam the position of father in the family is such that it makes him the fittest person to take over this responsibility. But this does not mean that man has been made a tyrant and oppressor in the household and woman has been handed over to him as a helpless chattel. According to Islam the real spirit of marital life is love, understanding and mutual respect. If the woman has been asked to obey the husband, the latter has been called upon to exercise his privileges towards the welfare of the family and treat the wife with love, affection and sweetness. It makes the marital bond strong but not unbreakable. It aims at keeping the bond intact only so long as it is founded on the sweetness of love or at least the possibility of lasting companionship still exists. When this possibility dies out, it gives man the right of divorce and woman the right of separation, and under certain conditions where married life has become a source of misery or nuisance, gives the Islamic courts of justice the authority to annul the marriage.

4.3. Relatives And Neighbors

Beyond the limited circle of family the next social sphere which is sufficiently wide is that of kinship and blood relationship. Those who are one's kith and kin through relationship with common parents or common brothers and sisters or relations through in-laws, Islam wants them all to be mutually affectionate, cooperative and helpful. In many places in the Qur'an good treatment of the Zawil Qurba (near relatives) is enjoined. In the traditions of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) good treatment of one's (Silat Al-Rahm) has been emphasized and counted among the highest virtues. A person who cold-shoulders his relatives or treat them an indifferent manner is looked down upon by Islam with great disfavor. But this does not mean that it is an Islamic virtue to be partial or unduly lenient toward one's relatives as may result in injustice, is repugnant to Islam which, condemns it as an act of Jahiliyyah (ignorance). Similarly, it is utterly un-Islamic for a government official or public trustee to support his at public expense or to be partial to his kith and kin in his official divisions: his would actually be a sinful act. Fair treatment of one's as enjoined by Islam, should be at one's own expenses and within the limits of justice and fair play.

Next to relations come the neighbors. The Qur'an has divided them into three categories :

A neighbor who is also a relative; An alien neighbor; and A casual or temporary neighbor with whom one had

occasion to live or travel for some time. All of them are deserving of fellow- feeling, affection, courtesy and fair treatment. The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) has said:

Ayesha and Ibn Omar reported from the Messenger of Allah who said; Gabriel did not stop to advice me about neighbor till I thought that he would soon make him an heir. - (Agreed upon)

In another tradition the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

Abu Hureira reported from the Messenger of Allah who said: "By Allah he does not believe, by Allah he does not believe, by Allah he does not believe". The companions asked who is he O Prophet of Allah? The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) replied, "One whose neighbor is not immune against his mischief".

Again, he (peace be upon him) said: that a person who enjoys a full meal while his neighbor is starving really possesses no faith in Islam. The Prophet was once informed of a woman who used to offer prayers regularly and keep fasts very often and gives alms frequently, but her neighbors were sick of her abusive tongue. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said that woman deserved only the fire of hell. He was also told of another woman who did not possess these virtues but did not trouble her neighbors either, and the Prophet (peace be upon him) said that she will be rewarded with paradise.

The complete sayings goes as follows:

Abu Hurairah reported that a man asked: O Messenger of Allah! such and such a woman is reputed for such prayer, and fasting and alms- giving, but she offends her neighbors with her tongue. He said: She will go to Hell. He inquired: O Messenger of Allah! such and such a woman is reputed less for her fasting, alms- giving and prayer but she gives alms of the remainders of curds and she does not offend her neighbors by her tongue. He said: She will go to Paradise. (Narrated by Ahmed and Bayhaqi)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) has laid so much emphasis on this virtue that he has advised that whenever a Muslim brings fruits for his children he should either send some to his neighbors as a gift or at least not throw the peelings outside the door so that the neighbors may not have a feeling of deprivation.

The complete Hadith reads as follows:

Amr Ibn Shueib who reproved from his father who reproved from his grandfather that the Messenger of Allah said narrated it: "Do you know what the duties of a neighbor are?" Help him if he seeks your help, give him succor if he seeks your succor, give him loan if he seeks you loan, give him relief if he is needy, nurse him if he falls ill, follow his bier if he dies, cheer him if he meets any good, sympathize with him if any calamity befalls him, raise not your building higher so as to obstruct his air without his permission, harass him not, give him when you purchase a fruit, if you do not do it, take it secretly; and let not your children take it out to excite thereby the anger of his children.

On one occasion the Prophet (peace be upon him) said that a man is really good if his neighbors regard him as such and he is bad if they consider him so. The complete Hadith goes as follows:

Ibn Mas'ud reported that a man asked the Holy Prophet: O Messenger of Allah! how can I know when I do good and when I do bad? The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) said: When you hear your neighbors say - you have done good, you have done good, and when you hear them say - you have done bad, you have done bad. (Narrated by Ibn Majah)

In brief, Islam requires all neighbors to be loving and cooperative with one another and share one another's sorrows and happiness. It enjoins that they should establish social relations in which one could depend upon the other and regard his life, honor and property safe among his neighbors. A society in which two persons, separated only by a wall, remain unacquainted with one another for years and those living in the same area of a town have no interest or confidence in one another can never be called Islamic.

Next to these is the wider circle of relationship which covers the entire society. The broad principles on which Islam seeks to regulate the general gamut of our social life are the following:

To cooperate in acts of virtue and piety and not to cooperate in acts of sin and injustice. To this point Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

"Help ye one another In righteousness and piety, But help ye not one another In sin and rancor: Fear God: for God Is strict in punishment." (Quran 5:2)

"One's friendship and enmity should be for the pleasure of God only; whatever you (Muslim) give should be given because God likes it to be given, and whatever you (Muslims) withhold should be withheld because God does not like its gift. (Sayings of the Holy Prophet).

"You (the Muslims) are the best community ever raised unto mankind, your duty is to command people to do good and prevent them from committing evil."

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

"Ye are the best Of Peoples, evolved For mankind, Enjoining what is right, Forbidding what is wrong, And believing in God. If only the People of the Book Had faith, it were best For them: among them are some who have faith, But most of them are perverted transgressors." (Qur'an 3:110)

And the Prophet in various of his other teachings said:

"Do not think evil of each other nor probe into each other's affairs nor excite one against the other. Keep yourself away from mutual hatred and jealousy. Do not unnecessarily oppose each other. Always remain the slaves and subjects of Allah and live like brothers among yourselves."

"Choose for others what you choose for yourself. " (Agreed upon)

These are some of the social values which Islam affirms and establishes and which it wants to see enshrined in the human society.

5. ECONOMICS PRINCIPLES OF ISLAM

Islam has laid down some principles and prescribed certain limits for the economic activity of man so that the entire pattern of production, exchange and distribution of wealth may conform to the Islamic standard of justice and equity. Islam does not concern itself with time-bound methods and techniques of economic production or with the details of the pattern and mechanisms and equity. Islam does not concern itself with time- bound methods and techniques of economic production or with the details of the organizational pattern and mechanisms. Such methods are specific for every age and are evolved in accordance with the needs and requirements of community and exigencies of the economic situation. What Islam aims, is that whatever be the form or mechanism of economic activity, the principles prescribed by it should find a permanent and paramount place in such activities under all circumstances and in all ages.

According to the Islamic point of view, God has created for mankind the earth and all that it contains. It is, therefore, the birthright of every human being to try and secure his share out of the world. All men enjoy this right equally and none can be deprived of it. Nor should one man get precedence over another. From the standpoint of Islam, there can be no bar on any individual, race, or class for taking to certain means of livelihood or adopting certain professions. All are entitled to equal opportunities in the economic realm. Similarly, no distinction is valid in Islam which would result in creating a monopoly of a particular means of livelihood for a particular person, class, race or group of people. It is the right of all men to strive and get their share of the means of sustenance provided by God on the earth. Islam ensures that this effort should be made in the context of equal opportunities and fair chances for all.

5.1. Right Of Property

Resources which are provided by nature free of cost and which can be use directly by man may be utilized freely and every one is entitled to benefit from them to the extent of his needs. Water flowing in the rivers and springs, woods in the forest trees, fruits of wild plants, wild grass and fodder, air, animals of the jungle, minerals under the surface of the earth and similar other resources cannot be monopolized by anyone. Nor can a restriction of any sort be imposed on their free use by God's creatures to fulfill their own needs. Of course, people who many want to use of these things for commercial purposes can be required to pay taxes to the state. Or if there is a misuse of the resources, the Government may step in and set the things right. But there is no bar on the individuals to avail of God's earth as long as they do not interfere with the rights of others or of the state.

Anyone who takes possession of the natural resources directly and renders it of value acquires a rightful title over it. For instance, if somebody takes possession of an uncultivated piece of land, on which nobody has a prior right of ownership, and makes a productive use of it he cannot be arbitrarily dispossessed of that piece of land. This is how a rights of ownership originated in the world. When man appeared for the first time in the world and population grew, everything was available to everyone. And whoever took possession of anything and made it useful in any manner became its owner; that is to say, he acquired the right of using it specially for his own purpose and obtaining compensation from others if they wanted to use it. This is the natural basis of all the economic activities of mankind and must not be tampered with. This right of ownership which one may acquire by permissible legal means is to be honored under all circumstances. The legality of ownership can be inquired thoroughly by the competent authority through legal means to determine its validity in accordance with the Shari'ah law. If, it be found to be illegally acquired, such ownership be annulled and be terminated accordingly. However, in no case, shall there be allowed any state or legislation to arbitrarily divest the people of their legitimate rights of ownership without justifiable cause. Islam cannot approve of an economic policy which destroys the rights conferred by the Shari'ah however attractive its name may be and whatever welfare pretensions it may make. Social justice and collective good are very dear to Islam, but not at the cost of rights given by the Shari'ah. It is as unjust to reduce or remove the restrictions placed by the Shari'ah on the rights of individual ownership for the sake of collective good of the community as it is to add such restrictions and limitations which do not fit into the scheme of the Islamic law. It is one of the duties of an Islamic state to protect the legal (Shari'ah) rights of the individuals and to ensure that they fulfill their obligations to the community as enjoined by law. That is how Islam strikes a balance between individualism and collectivism.

5.2. The Problem Of Equality

If we observe the phenomena of nature and God's blessings unto mankind we find that He has not observed equality in the distribution of His bounties and favors but in His infinite wisdom has accorded precedence to some individuals over others. Beauty of form, pleasantness of voice, excellence of physique and mental talents, etc, have not

been granted to men in equal degree. The same is the case with the material means of life. Human nature has been so ordained that divergence, variety and inequality among men in their modes and standards of living seem to be most natural thing. Variety is the spice of life and the driving spirit behind human effort and excellence. Consequently, all those schemes and ideologies which are forced to mankind are unrealistic and impossible to achieve. The equality in which Islam believes is equality in respect of the opportunities of struggle for securing a livelihood and for climbing the uppermost rung of the ladder of well-being and prosperity.

Islam desires that no legal, functional or traditional handicaps should exist in society, to prevent an individual from struggling for a living according to his capacity and talent nor should any social distinctions subsist with the object of safeguarding the privileges of a particular class, race and dynasty or group of people. And those schemes and ideologies which serve the vested interests or which want to perpetrate the hold of a certain group are repugnant to Islam and can have no place in its scheme of things. Such movements seek to establish, through force and resort to artificial means, an unnatural inequality in place of the natural limited inequality which feeds the springs of incentive to effort in a society. Hence, Islam aims at wiping them out and putting the economic system on the natural footing so that the opportunities of struggle may remain open to all. At the same time Islam does not agree with those who desire to enforce complete equality in respect of the mean of production and the fruits of economic endeavor, as they aim at replacing, limited natural inequalities by an artificial equality.

Only that system can be the nearest to human nature in which everyone joins the economic struggle at the start and in the circumstances in which God has created him. He, who has inherited an airplane should struggle to be equipped with it; while he who has only a pair of legs should stand on his feet and try to move ahead. The laws of society should neither establish a permanent monopoly of the airplane owner over his airplane and make it impossible for the bare-footed to acquire an airplane nor such that the race for everyone of them should compulsory begin from one point. And under the same conditions and they should all per force be tied to each other right till the end of the race. Contrary to this the economic laws should be such as to make it possible for the bare-footed who started his race under adverse conditions, to secure and possess an airplane if he can do so by dint of his struggle and ability. And for him who inherited the airplane, to be left behind in the race and be without it if that is due to his own inability or incapacity or inefficiency. Effort should be paid and inactivity penalized.

5.3. Social Justice

Islam does not wish that this economic race takes place in an atmosphere of cold impartiality, moral neutrality and social apathy. it deems it desirable that the participants in the economic race should be considerate and sympathetic to one another. On the one hand, Islam through its moral injunctions, aims at creating a feeling of mutual love and affection among the people. Under which they may help their weak and weary brethren and at the same time create a permanent institution in the society to guarantee help and assistance to those who are lacking in the necessary means of subsistence. People who are unable to take part in the economic race should secure their share from this social institution. And those who need some assistance commence their struggle in the economic field may also receive it in full measure from this institution. To this end, Islam has commanded that Zakat should be levied at the rate of 2.5% per annum on the total accumulated wealth of the country as well as on the invested capital. On agricultural produce 10% are levied on lands which are irrigated by natural means (through rains) and 5% on irrigation's which require man's efforts. And 2.5% is required on mineral products. The annual Zakat should also be levied at a specified rate, on the herds of cattle owned by anyone beyond a certain minimum number. The amount of Zakat thus collected is to be spent on giving assistance to the poor, the orphans and the indigent, etc. This provides a men's of social insurance in the presence of which no one in an Islamic society can ever remain without being well provided with the necessities of life. No worker can ever be forced through fear of star to accept any conditions of employment which may be dictated to him by the industrialist or the landlord to his disadvantage. And nobody's physical health can ever be allowed to fail below the minimum standard of fitness for lake of proper medical care and hospitalization.

With regards to the position of the individual, vis--vis the community, Islam aims at striking such a balance between them as it would promote the individual liberty of a person and at the same time ensure that such freedom is not detrimental to the interests of the community as a whole. But is positively conducive to its growth and tranquility. Islam does not approve of a political or economic organization which aims at merging the identity of the individual into that of the community and depriving him of the freedom essential for a proper development of his personality and talent. The inevitable consequence of nationalizing all the means of production in a country is the annihilation of the individual by the community, and in these circumstances the existence and development of his individuality becomes extremely difficult, if not impossible. Just as political and social freedom is essential for the individual, economic freedom is likewise indispensable for

civilized moral existence. Unless we desire to completely eliminate the individuality of man, our social life should have enough margin for an individual to be freedom to earn his living, to maintain the freedom of his conscience, and to be able to develop his moral and intellectual faculties according to his own inclinations and aptitudes. Living on a dole or virtual dole at the hands of others cannot be very satisfying. Even though it is plentiful because the retardation of mental, moral and spiritual development to which it ultimately leads can never be compensated or counterbalanced by mere physical welfare and prosperity which too are doubtful.

Just as Islam does not like such a system, it also does not favor a social system which gives unbridled economic and social freedom to individuals and gives them a blank check to secure their individual interest and achieve their objective even at the whole or by exploiting and misappropriating the wealth of others. Between these two extremes Islam has adopted the middle course according to which the individual is first called upon, in the interest of the community, to accept certain restricts, and is then left free to regulate his own affairs. He has freedom of enterprise and competition within a framework which guarantees the good of both the individual and the society. It is not possible to explain all these obligations and restrictions in detail and I shall, therefore, content myself with presenting a bare outline of them.

5.4. Obligations And Restrictions

Take the case of earning a livelihood first. The meticulous care with which Islam has distinguished between right and wrong in respect of the means of earning wealth is not to be found in any other legal and social system existing in the world. It condemns as illegal all those means of livelihood which injure, morally or materially, the interests of another individual or of the society as a whole. Islamic law categorically rejects as illegal the manufacture and sale of liquor and other intoxication, adultery, professional dancing and obscenity, gambling, speculation, race and lotteries, transactions of speculative, imaginary, fraudulent or controversial nature; business transactions in which the gain of one party is absolutely guaranteed and assured while that of the other party is left uncertain and doubtful; price manipulation by withholding the sale of necessities of life; and many other similar transactions which are detrimental to the interests of community. If we examine this aspect of the economic laws of Islam, we will find a long list of practices declared illegal most of which can and are making people millionaires in the capitalistic system. Islam forbids all these unfair means and allows freedom of earning wealth only by those means through which a person renders some real and useful service to the community and thereby entities himself to a fair and just compensation for it.

Islam accepts the rights of ownership of an individual the rights of ownership of an individual over the wealth earned by him by legitimate means but even these rights are not unqualified. A man can spend his legitimate wealth, only in legitimate avenues and by legitimate means. Islam has imposed restrictions on expenditure so that while one can lead a decent life, one cannot waste one's riches on luxurious pursuits. A person cannot transgress the prescribed limits of exhibiting his status and affluence and behave as super being vis--vis other persons. Certain forms of illegal and wasteful expenditure have been clearly and unequivocally prohibited while some others, though not expressly banned, may be prohibited at the discretion of the Islamic state.

One is permitted to accumulate wealth that is left over after meeting his legitimate and reasonable requirements, and these savings can also be used in producing more wealth but there are some restrictions on both of these activities. In the event of accumulation of wealth he will, of course, have to pay Zakat at the rate of 2.5% per annum on the accumulation exceeding the specified minimum. If he desires to invest it in business he can only do so in what is declared as legitimate business. It is permissible for a man to undertake the legitimate business himself or to make his capital available to others on a profit-loss sharing basis. It is not at all objectionable in Islam if, working with in these li, a man becomes even a millionaire; rather, this will constitute a Divine favor. But in the interests of the community as a whole Islam imposes two conditions on the individual; first, that he should pay Zakat on his commercial goods and 'Ushr (1/10) (which has not required any man effort for irrigation) and 5% on irrigated produce which has required man'., efforts of the value of agricultural produce, secondly, that he should deal fairly and honestly with those whom he brings into his partnership in trade industry or agriculture, with those whom he takes in his employment and with the state and the community at large. If one doe: not do justice to others, particularly his employees, of his own accord, the Islamic state will compel him to do so.

Then again, even wealth that is accumulated within these legal limits is not allowed by Islam to be concentrated at a point or place for a long time. By virtue of its of inheritance Islam spreads it over a large number of persons from generation to generation. In this respect, the spirit of Islamic law is different from that of other laws prevailing in the contemporary world. Most of the inheritance laws attempt to keep the wealth once accumulated by a person concentrated in the hands of the beneficiary from generation to generation. As against this, Islam has made a law under which the wealth accumulated by a person in his lifetime is distributed among all of his near relatives soon after his death. If, there are no near relatives, then

distant relatives are to benefit from it in the proportions laid down by the law for each one of them. And, if no distant relative is forthcoming, then the entire Muslim society is entitled to its inheritance. Under this law, the creation or continuance of any big family of capitalists or landlords becomes impossible.

6. THE SPIRITUAL SYSTEM OF ISLAM

What is the spiritual system of Islam and what is its relation with the system of life as a whole? To understand this, it is necessary to carefully study the difference between the Islamic concept of spirituality and that of other religions and ideologies. In the absence of a clear understanding of this difference, it often happens that when talking about the spiritual system of Islam, many of the vague notions associated with the word "spiritual" unconsciously come to one's mind, and in this state of confusion, it becomes difficult for one to comprehend the spiritual system of Islam which is not only transcends the due of spirit and matter but is the nucleus of the integrated and unified concept of life presented by Islam.

6.1. Body - Soul Conflict

The idea which has been most influential in making the climate of thought in philosophy and religion is that body and soul are mutually antagonistic and conflicting and hence, they cannot go together in life, and one can develop only at the cost of the other. For the soul, the confines of body and matter are a prison-house; the mundane activities of worldly life are the shackles with which the soul is kept in bondage and its growth is arrested. Ms has inevitably led to the well-known concept of classifying the universe into the spiritual and the secular. Those who chose the secular path were convinced, at the very outset, that the demands of spirituality could not be complied with, and thus, went headlong into a sensate outlook in life culminating in stark materialism and hedonism. Consequently, all spheres of worldly activities may they be social, political, economic or cultural were deprived of the light of spirituality and the world was smitten with injustice and tyranny. On the other hand, those who wanted to tread the path of spiritual excellence innovated such ways and devices for the development and elevation of the spirit, as to make them "noble outcasts" in this world. They believed that it was not possible to find any process for spiritual growth which might be compatible with a normal life in this world. In their view, physical self-denial and mortification's of the flesh were necessary for developing and perfecting the spirit. They invented spiritual exercises and their ascetic practices which would kill one's physical desires and render the body senseless and even useless. They regarded forests, mountains and other solitary places, as ideal places for spiritual development because in those hideouts the hustle and bustle of civilization would not interfere in their spiritual practices and nose- gazing meditations. They could not conceive of the feasibility of any means of spiritual development except by withdrawing themselves from the world and its affairs and severing all contacts with society and civilization.

This conflict of body and soul resulted in the evolution of two different ideals for the perfection of man. One of the ideals was of material perfection, which meant that a man should be surrounded by all the material comforts and bounties of the world and regard himself as nothing but an animal, the ideal being the seek dizzy heights in this realm. The result was that he could exceed as an animal but the man in him could not seek its flowering. Men learned to fly like birds, swim like crocodile, run like horses and even terrorize and destroy like wolves - but to live like noble human beings they learned not. The other ideal was of the perfection of spiritual life to an extent that the senses are not only subdued and conquered but supra sensory powers are awakened and the limitations of the sensory world are done away with. With these new conquests men could distant voices like powerful wireless sets, see remote objects as one does with the telescope and develop powers through which the mere touch of their hand or focus of their sight may heal the unhealable. This supra sensory field has been the other avenue of human advancement, but how throbbing human this really is not difficult to visualize!

The Islamic viewpoint differs radically from that of all the prevailing religious and philosophical systems in this regard. According to Islam, God has appointed man as his "Khalifah" (trustee) in the universe. He has invested him with certain authority and laid upon him certain responsibilities and obligations for the fulfillment of which He has endowed him with the best and most suitable physical frame. The body has been created with the sole object that the soul should make use of it in the exercise of its authority and the fulfillment of its duties and responsibilities. Hence, the body is not a prison house for the soul but its workshop or factory, and if there is any possibility for the growth and development of the soul, it is only through the use of the power machines and instruments provided by this workshop.

Consequently, this world is not a place of punishment in which the human soul has been confined somehow but is a field in which God has sent him to work and do his duty toward Him. Innumerable things in this universe have been placed at the disposal of the human soul and many more human beings endowed with it have been created in this world to fulfill the duties of this very vicegerent. The natural urges of man have given birth to civilization, culture, and social systems. The spiritual development which is possible in this world should not take the form of man turning his face from the workshop and retiring in some

uninhabited comer. Rather, the only form it should take is that man should live and work in it and give the best account of himself. It is in the nature of an examination center for him; every aspect and sphere of life is, as it were, like a question paper in this test; the home, the fan3ily, the neighborhood, the society, the

Market place, the office, the factory, the school, the law courts, the police station, the parliament, the peace conference and the battlefield, all represent 'question papers' on different subjects which man has been called upon to answer. If he does not take any question paper, or leaves most of the answer books blank, he is bound to fail in the examination. The only possibility of such and development would lie in man's spending his whole time and giving his whole attention to this examination and to attempt as far as possible to answer all the question papers handed over to him.

Islam rejects and condemns the asceticism of life, and proposes a set of methods and processes for the spiritual development of man not outside this world but inside it, one that passes through the rough and tumble of life. According to it the real place for the growth, uplift and elevation of the spirit lies right in the midstream of the activity of life and not in solitary places of spiritual hibernation.

6.2. Criterion For Moral Development

After this exposition of the basic approach of Islam let us try to discuss the criterion given by Islam to judge the development of decay of the soul. The answer to this question lies in the concept of Khilafat which has just been mentioned. In capacity as the Khalifah (Servant) of God, man is answerable to Him for all his activities. It is his duty to use 0 the powers with which he is invested and all the means placed at his disposal in this world, in accordance with the Divine Will. He should utilize to the fullest extent all the faculties and potentialities bestowed upon him for seeking the approbation of God. In his dealings with other human beings he should adopt an attitude which is approved by God. In brief, all his efforts and energies should be directed towards regulating the affairs of this world in the manner in which God wants them to be regulated. The more admirably an man performs this function, with a sense of responsibility, obedience and humility, and with the object of seeking the pleasure of God, the nearer he will be to God. In Islam, spiritual development is synonymous with nearness to God. Likewise, he will remain away from God if he is lazy, slothful, transgressor, rebellious and disobedient. And being away from God signifies, in Islam, the spiritual fall and decay of man.

This explanation should make it clear that from the Islamic point of view the sphere of activity of a religious-minded man and of a secular-minded man is the same. Both will work in the same field of action; rather a man of religion will work with greater enthusiasm than a secular minded person. The man of religion will be as active as the seeker after the world or indeed much more active, in the domestic and social functions of life which extend from the confines of the household to the market square or the venue of international conferences. Of course, what will distinguish their course of action will be the nature of their relations with God and the objective which they pursue. Whatever a religious man does, will be with the feeling that he is answerable to God, with the object of securing Divine Pleasure, and I accordance with the Law which God ha ordained for him. As against this, a worldly person will be irresponsible, indifferent towards God and will be guided only by his person,, motives in his actions. This difference make the whole of the material life of a man of religion a thoroughly spiritual venture and the whole of the life of a worldly person devoid o the spark of spirituality.

6.3. Road To Spirituality

Now, we are in a position to briefly understand the road which Islam chalks out for the pursuit of spiritual development of man in the context of the mundane life in this world.

The first step in this direction is Iman (faith). It means that the idea which should hold supreme in the mind and heart of a man is that God alone is his Master, Sovereign and Deity; seeking His Pleasure is the aim of all his endeavors; and His Commands alone constitute the law of his life. This should be his firm conviction, not merely cognition of the intellect, but also of the will. The stronger and deeper this conviction, the more profound the faith will be, and it will enable man to tread the path of spiritual development with patience and steadfastness and face all the vicissitudes firmly and squarely.

The second stage is of Ita'at (obedience) meaning that a man divests himself of his independence altogether, and accepts subservience to God in practice after having proclaimed faith in Him as his creed. The subservience is called Islam (obedience) in the language of the Qur'an. Thus, it means that man should not only acknowledge God as his Lord and Sovereign but should actually submit before Him and fashion his entire life in obedience to the Lord.

The third stage is that of Taqwa (piety) which consists in the practical manifestation of the faith in God in the mode of daily life.

Taqwa (piety) also consists in desisting from everything which God has forbidden or even that which he disapproves even slightly, in a readiness to undertake all that God has commanded and in observing the distinction between lawful and unlawful, right and wrong, and good and bad in life.

The last and the highest stage is that of Ihsan, (benediction) which signifies that man has identified his will with the Will of God. And has brought it, at least as far as he is concerned, completely in tuned with the Divine Will, with the result that he has begun to like what is liked by the Lord and to abhor what is disapproved by Him. Man should then, not only himself avoid the evils which God does not like to spread on His earth, but should use all his power and energy to wipe them off the face of earth; and he should not merely rest content with adoring himself with the virtues which God desires to flourish, but should also strive to establish and propagate them in the world even at the cost of his life. A man who reaches this state attains the highest pinnacle of spirituality and is nearest to God.

This path of spiritual development is not meant for individuals only but for the communities and nations as well. Like individuals, community also, after passing through the various stages of spiritual elevation, may reach the ultimate stage of Ihsan (benediction), and also a state with all its administrative machinery may become Mu'min (faithful), Muslim (obedient), Muttaqi (pious) and Muhsin (beneficent). In fact, the ideals aimed by Islam are achieved in a perfect manner only when the whole community moves on this path and a Muttaqi and Muhsin (pious and beneficent) state comes into existence in this world.

That is the acme of civilization where virtue reigns in society and vice is subdued.

Let us now cast a glance at the mechanism of spiritual training which Islam has laid down for preparing individuals and society for this purpose.

The spiritual system of Islam rests on four fundamentals. The first is prayer (Salat) which brings man into communion with God five times a day, reviving His remembrance, reiterating His fear, developing His love, reminding man of the Divine Commands again and again, and thus, preparing him for obedience to God. These prayers are not to be offered individually but it is obligatory to offer them in congregation so that the whole community and the society may be prepared for this process of spiritual development. It is a tool of individual as well as social training in the path of spiritual elevation in Islam.

The second is Zakat which develops the sense of monetary sacrifice, sympathy and cooperation among Muslims. There are people who wrongly interpret Zakat as a mere tax although the spirit underlying Zakat is entirely different from that which lies at the root of a tax. The real meaning of Zakat is sublimity and purification. By using this word, Islam desires to impress on man the real value of Zakat which is inspired by a true love of God, that the monetary help he renders to his brethren will in fact, purity and benefit his soul.

The third is fasting (Saum) which for a full month every year, trains a man individually and the Muslim community as a whole, in piety and self-restraint. Enables the society, the rich and the poor alike, to experience the pangs of hunger, and prepares the people to undergo any hardship to seek the pleasure of God.

The fourth is Hajj (Pilgrimage) which aims at fostering universal brotherhood of the faithful as the basis of worship of God, and has culminated in a movement which has been answering the call of truth throughout the centuries and will, God willing, go on answering this call till eternity.